



Russell McLeagh

pro bono overview

— 2026 —

Assisting our communities
in Aotearoa New Zealand

Increasing access to legal advice

At Russell McVeagh we are committed to making a positive difference in the communities where we live and work. Pro bono is a core part of our business and culture, with a long-standing focus on using our skills and resources to support access to justice.

We proudly support a wide range of charities, not-for-profits and social enterprises working to improve outcomes for people and communities most in need across Aotearoa New Zealand.

As a founding participant in the Framework for Collaborative Pro Bono in Aotearoa, our commitment to prioritising pro bono work remains strong. Last year, our lawyers contributed an average of 25 pro bono hours each (more on [page 4](#)).

As we launch this year's Overview, we are thrilled to celebrate our third annual Pro Bono Week. To mark the occasion, we are hosting a special webinar with Before 16, a New Zealand movement advocating to raise the minimum age for social media use to 16, featuring members Nicole Green and Dr Samantha Marsh (more about their work on [page 8](#)).

Our pro bono clients consistently bring fascinating and often challenging legal issues that sit outside the scope of our typical work. These matters not only make a meaningful difference but also strengthen our people as lawyers, building capability, broadening perspectives and deepening our connection to the communities we support.

It is a privilege to Chair the firm's pro bono programme and to see the breadth of work our teams undertake in support of organisations and matters that make a genuine difference.



Jesse Fairley
Partner & Pro Bono
Committee Co-Chair



Tim Clarke
Partner & Pro Bono
Committee Co-Chair

Reaching
our pro
bono
target



25
hours
Target

In 2025, we
achieved our
target of 25 hours
per fee earner
(per year on average)

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Framework for Collaborative Pro Bono in Aotearoa

Launched in November 2024, the Framework for Collaborative Pro Bono in Aotearoa is a profession-led initiative to support and promote pro bono work within New Zealand law firms.

Russell McVeagh is proud to be one of the foundation participants, working alongside Te Ara Ture, New Zealand’s pro bono clearinghouse, and five other New Zealand law firms to develop the Framework. Inspired by successful models from Australia and the UK, the Framework aims to enhance access to justice for low income and vulnerable people, foster collaboration and a strong pro bono culture across the motu, and advocate for legal reform.

The Framework sets an aspirational target of 25 pro bono hours per lawyer annually, with participating firms agreeing to report against this target annually in an anonymous and de-identified format, allowing for benchmarking and the development of a strong pro bono culture. This initiative aligns closely with our firm’s [approach to pro bono](#).

RMcV Senior Solicitor Philip Trebilco, Partner Nathaniel Walker and Scholar Alice McIntosh.



“Not only is pro bono work an opportunity to work for a good cause and help members of our community, it also raises challenging legal issues and provides an opportunity to extend your legal skills. More generally though, my pro bono work has brought me into contact with some inspiring social enterprise founders and community volunteers who are passionate about service and making a difference in their communities.”



Hannah Wilson
Russell McVeagh Pro Bono Partner of the Year 2025

FY2025 Pro Bono at a glance

72 
Pro bono clients

5,765
Total hours of pro bono work

1,505
Hours of Community Law work

25 
Average number of pro bono hours worked per lawyer

Hours in the community

965 hours with
Māngere Community Law Centre

540 hours with
Wellington & Hutt Valley Community Law Centres

70 hours with
Aotearoa Disability Law

555 hours of work
through Te Ara Ture



Access to essential healthcare and research



www.wellingtoncharityhospital.org.nz

Partners Tim Clarke and Doran Wyatt with Solicitor Ruby Blake-Manson and Trust Board members at the Agreement to Lease signing in our Wellington office.

Wellington Charity Hospital Trust

The Wellington Regional Charity Hospital Trust is establishing the Wellington region's first charity day-hospital, providing free surgical care for patients who are unable to access treatment through public or private pathways. Modelled on successful charity hospitals in Canterbury and Southland, the day-hospital will support patients across Wellington, Kāpiti and Wairarapa.

In 2025, philanthropists Sir Mark Dunajtschik and Dame Dorothy Spotswood pledged to fully fund the day-hospital's build and fit-out, excluding medical equipment. In recognition of Dame Dorothy's support, the facility will be named the Dorothy Spotswood Charity Hospital.

A major milestone was reached in April 2026, with the Agreement to Lease formally signed by Trust Chairman Dr Graham Sharpe and witnessed by Dame Dorothy. The agreement secures a permanent home for the hospital and marks the transition from vision to delivery.

Our firm has supported the project from the outset through extensive pro bono legal work, led by partners Tim Clarke, a Trust Board member, and Doran Wyatt, alongside the wider Russell McVeagh team. The work is delivered in close collaboration with the Trust and its advisers, helping to bring this important community initiative to life.

Cure Kids

For over 20 years, we have provided pro bono support to Cure Kids, a charity dedicated to funding research that improves the health and wellbeing of children across Aotearoa and the Pacific. As the largest funder of child health research outside Government, Cure Kids supports more than \$10 million of research projects, including work into childhood cancers, rheumatic heart disease and mental health and wellbeing.

In October 2025, we again partnered with Cure Kids for its largest annual fundraiser, the 24 Hour Team Challenge at Eden Park in Auckland. Over 24 hours, our team joined more than 20 others to keep exercise machines moving continuously, combining teamwork, hard mahi and a shared commitment to giving back. The event raised close to \$250,000 for Cure Kids, surpassing the previous year's total.

Cure Kids has recently released their [State of Child in Aotearoa New Zealand Report](#), which emphasises the need for urgent, collaborative action to address the worsening state and continued inequality of child health in Aotearoa.

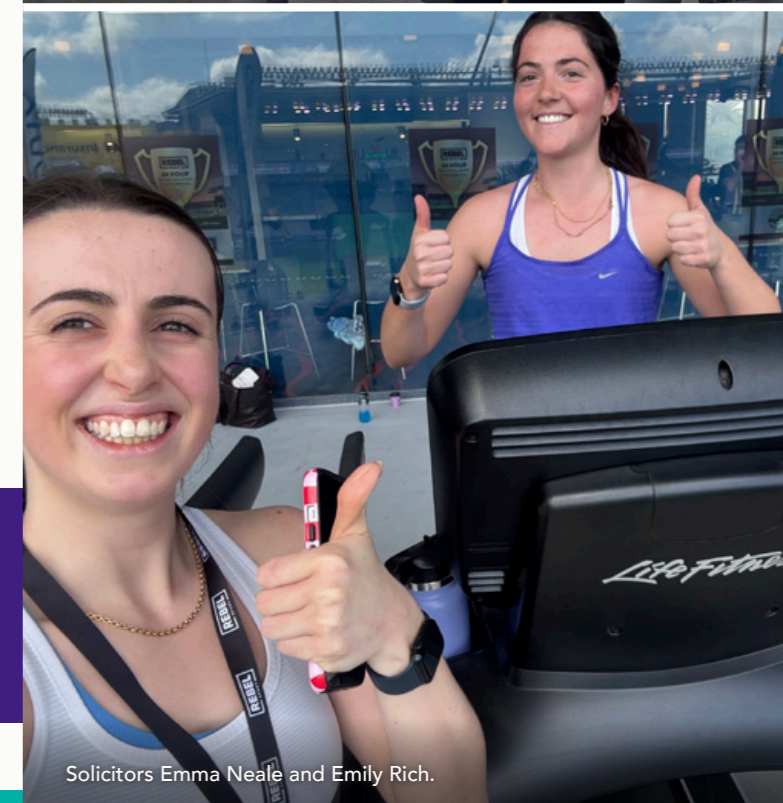
www.curekids.org.nz



Board Chair David Butler and CEO Ben McLaren.



Manager Jenny Hirst.



Solicitors Emma Neale and Emily Rich.

Investing in our tamariki and rangatahi

Investing in children and young people



www.b416.co.nz

Partner Allison Arthur-Young leads a panel discussion with Anna Curzon, Malindi MacLean and Dr Samantha Marsh from B416.

Before 16

Founded by a coalition of parents, entrepreneurs and public health advocates, Before 16 (B416) is a New Zealand charitable trust advocating to raise the minimum age for social media use to 16, in response to growing concerns over youth mental health and online safety.

Over the past year, our work with B416 has focused on establishing it as a charitable trust and helping to support its early Government engagement and policy agenda. This has included structure advice, liaising with Charities Services and Government relations support, including drafting an aide memoire to the Prime Minister, engagement with Government officials, support with advocacy materials and workshopping how a proposed minimum age for social media could operate in practice. We have also supported B416's commercial activities through targeted review and refinement of key agreements.



B416 supporters Catherine Wedd and Blair Knight.



Te Whāngai participants working in native plant nurseries.

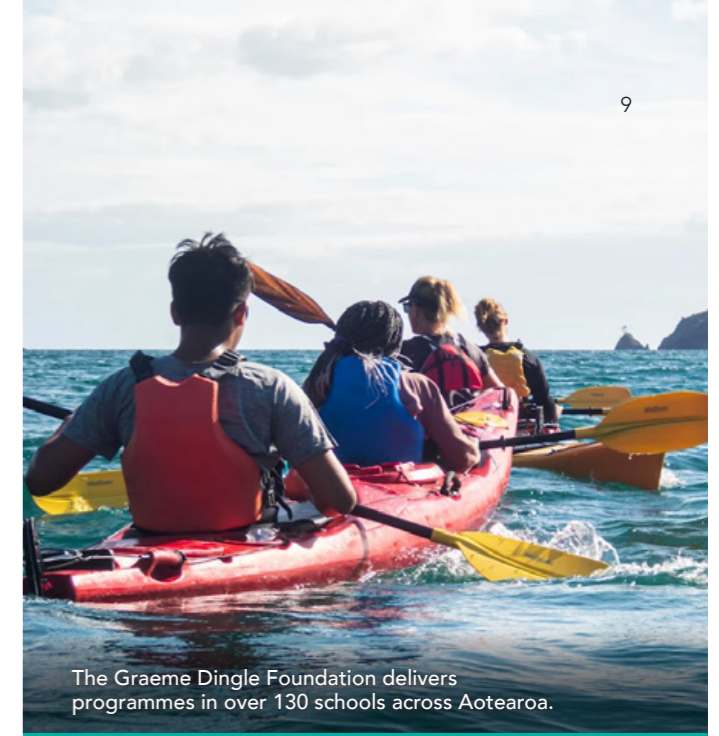
Te Whāngai Trust

[Te Whāngai Trust](#) is a social and environmental enterprise creating pathways into employment and education through hands-on work in native plant nurseries and environmental restoration.

Working with rangatahi, people transitioning from the corrections system, and others facing barriers to employment, the Trust delivers structured training, mentoring and work-based learning. Operating across a seven-day model, it supports youth and community-based programmes during the week, alongside a restorative justice-focused programme on weekends for individuals reintegrating into the community.

In partnership with the Ministry of Social Development, Department of Corrections, philanthropic funders and a growing network of public and private sector clients, Te Whāngai Trust combines social programme delivery with commercial nursery and planting operations. Russell McVeagh provides pro bono support across governance, contracting and public sector engagement.

[READ MORE](#)



The Graeme Dingle Foundation delivers programmes in over 130 schools across Aotearoa.

Graeme Dingle Foundation

For over 30 years, the [Graeme Dingle Foundation](#) has supported tamariki and rangatahi across Aotearoa to build the skills and confidence they need to thrive. Working closely with schools and communities, the Foundation delivers evidence-based programmes to nearly 16,000 young people each year, supporting children and young people from ages five to 24 at key stages of their development.

The Foundation's programmes focus on building resilience, self-belief and positive life skills through mentoring and strong role models. Independent research, undertaken with university partners, shows these programmes lead to improved attitudes and behaviour, better engagement at school and reduced at-risk behaviours. Since 1995, the Graeme Dingle Foundation has reached more than 411,000 young people, helping them develop the confidence and direction to realise their potential.

[READ MORE](#)

Assisting our communities



www.communitylaw.org.nz

RMcV volunteers Lara Cable and Lisa Nguyen, Community Law staff members Redha Al-Aubera and Iscah Paskell, and RMcV volunteers Caitlin Rutherford and Tiana Mayo.

Community Law Centres

Community Law Centres offer legal assistance to those who need it most, especially where cost is a barrier. We are proud of our long-standing pro bono partnerships with Māngere Community Law Centre since 1987 and Community Law Wellington and Hutt Valley since 2003.

Each week, Russell McVeagh sends volunteer rōia (lawyers) to these centres to provide free legal advice at drop-in sessions. Our volunteers offer tailored advice on a wide range of legal issues, including employment, family law, tenancy disputes, consumer rights and other civil matters. Additionally, our support includes research and secondee work, benefiting clients and providing our volunteers valuable legal challenges to grow their skills and expertise.

“Community Law provides free legal support every day to people in difficult situations who would not otherwise be able to access it. The team is wonderful to work with, and it’s incredibly rewarding to be a small part of their important kaupapa.”

Meghan Grant and Louis Daysh
Russell McVeagh Co-coordinators of Community Law Wellington and Hutt Valley pro bono support

“By offering one-off advice, we empower clients to make informed decisions about their rights.”

Caitlin Walker and Nicole Simmons
Russell McVeagh Co-coordinators of Māngere Community Law Centre pro bono support

Aotearoa Disability Law

[Aotearoa Disability Law](#) (ADL) is the only specialist community law centre in Aotearoa that exclusively provides free legal services, education and advocacy for the Deaf and disabled community. Recently, we helped restructure their organisation to reflect their expanded national role. Our support also includes assistance with consumer and civil disputes.

“Russell McVeagh’s expertise enables us to undertake our work with confidence knowing we are providing high-quality, accurate support for New Zealand’s Deaf and disabled communities.”

Geraldine Lewis, General Manager, ADL



Te Ara Ture

Russell McVeagh continues to work with [Te Ara Ture](#), an innovative online clearinghouse connecting volunteer lawyers with disadvantaged Kiwis referred by Community Law Centres across the motu. This initiative helps make the justice system fairer and more accessible. By being part of the Te Ara Ture network, our people can use their expertise to support some of Aotearoa’s most vulnerable communities facing legal issues.

“Russell McVeagh’s work with Te Ara Ture and Community Law Centres makes a significant difference to access to justice. These often complex and challenging matters are handled with expertise and professionalism.”

Sabrina Muck, Director, Te Ara Ture

Uplifting Rainbow communities



www.wellingtonprideparade.co.nz

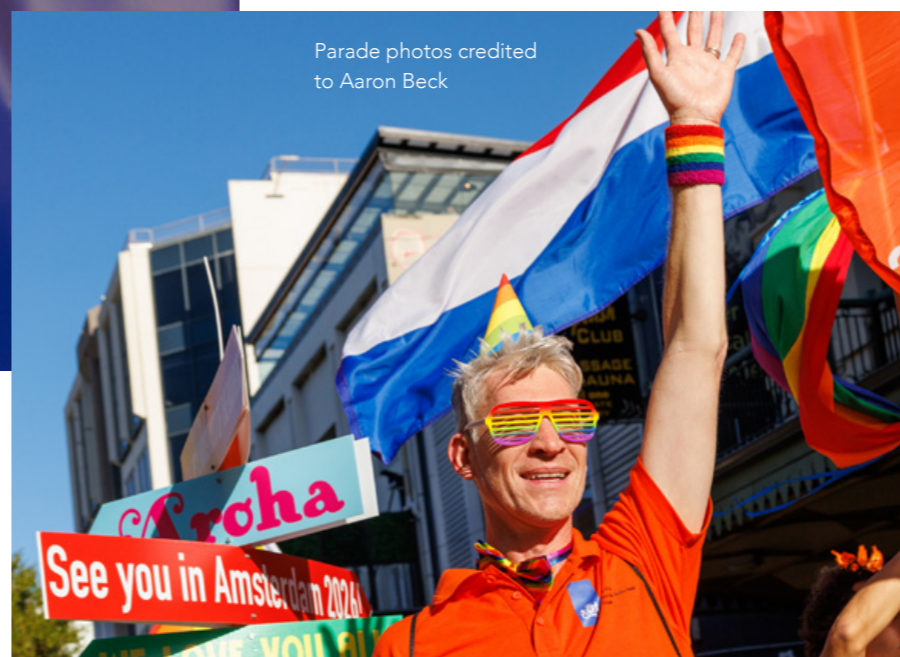
Wellington Pride Parade Trust

Wellington Pride Parade helps raise the visibility of Te Whanganui-a-Tara's Rainbow communities and encourages a more inclusive Aotearoa. This year's Parade was the largest yet, drawing over 15,000 spectators to the streets and bringing together more than 1,100 participants marching proudly for progress.

More than 50 floats reflected a broad cross-section of society, from grassroots community organisations to large corporates, united in support of diversity and inclusion. The Parade highlighted the ongoing importance of protecting and advancing the rights of trans and takatāpui communities, and was opened by mana whenua, underscoring its grounding in local partnership and respect. The event was attended by four mayors from across the Wellington region, reflecting strong civic support.

The Parade aims to create visibility, celebration and, critically, safe spaces. As one attendee shared, "We're a cis, straight couple who attended as allies in the past, and were so proud to bring our child this year and see the joy in their face, and hear their stories of a new felt community. We're so grateful this space exists as we support them to navigate realising who they are."

Russell McVeagh was pleased to support the Wellington Pride Parade Trust by providing strategic advice and assistance on internal governance matters.



Parade photos credited to Aaron Beck

"The team at Russell McVeagh have been amazing in providing timely, high-quality legal advice on some gnarly operational issues this year. Their support was critical in helping us deliver our most successful Parade yet."

Dr Sam Mackay
Chair, Wellington Pride Parade Trust



RainbowYOUTH

RainbowYOUTH is a national, youth-led organisation supporting queer, gender diverse, takatāpui (Māori LGBTQIA+) and intersex young people, along with their whānau and wider communities. They operate drop-in centres, facilitate social groups across various regions and provide one on-one support around gender and sexuality.

We have been assisting RainbowYOUTH for 10 years. Over the past year, we have assisted with workplace disputes, advised on updates to RainbowYOUTH's constitution and policies, and provided general legal advisory services.

"Russell McVeagh's pro bono services are essential for a charity like ours. In the challenging and uncertain moments, knowing we have access to reliable, expert advice enables us to stay grounded and focused on delivering the best outcomes for our young people."

Petazae Thoms
Kaiwhakahaere Matua /
Director, RainbowYOUTH

Building biodiversity



www.protectrakiura.co.nz

Protect Rakiura Trust

Protect Rakiura Trust was established 2024 on Stewart Island, known as Rakiura by Māori. Formed in response to proposals to use aerial toxins as part of predator control initiatives, the Trust represents the concerns of local Māori and non-Māori residents, many of whom have deep, multi-generational connections to the island and its environment

The Trust's work focuses on community education, advocacy and research relating to predator and pest management. Its work promotes safe, evidence-based approaches, supports independent scientific baseline studies and advocates for law reform to protect the environment, community wellbeing and informed decision-making. By raising awareness locally and nationally, Protect Rakiura Trust aims to support the long-term health, livelihoods and sustainability of the Rakiura community.

Photos credited
to Emir de Souza



Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne

The Karori Sanctuary Trust (trading as [Zealandia](#) | Te Māra a Tāne) operates a globally recognised urban ecosanctuary that has transformed Wellington's birdlife.

We have worked with Zealandia since 1998 on various matters and have continued to provide strategic and legal advice over the past year, including reviewing employment agreements and providing tailored advice on complex workplace matters.

Many of our people are passionate about Zealandia's conservation work and its bold 500-year vision to restore biodiversity. Our Wellington people enjoy an annual night tour of the sanctuary, often spotting kiwi and tuatara.

[READ MORE](#)

ZEALANDIA
TE MĀRA A TĀNE



Waitaki Whitestone Geopark Trust

The [Waitaki Whitestone Geopark Trust](#) is guiding the development of New Zealand's first and only UNESCO Global Geopark, one of 229 worldwide, in Te Waipounamu (South Island).

We provided pro bono advice on the Trust's legal obligations, helped develop underpinning policies and supported them to build sustainable relationships and partnerships. Our work contributes to safe, informed, and culturally and environmentally respectful tourism in one of Aotearoa's most geologically significant regions.



[READ MORE](#)



Aiding humanitarian efforts



www.kiwikareukraine.co.nz

Chair Tenby Powell (third from left) and volunteers with their ambulance fleet.

Kiwi K.A.R.E Ukraine

Kiwi K.A.R.E (Kiwi Aid and Refugee Evacuation) provides medical and humanitarian aid and evacuation services to the people of Ukraine. They have built a strong network across Ukraine, Poland and Germany to deliver aid directly to those in need.

Recently, the Kyiv administration has formally acknowledged Kiwi K.A.R.E's contribution over the past four years, recognising the significant scale and impact of its work. Kiwi K.A.R.E has recently secured its third major US funding bid, enabling the continued delivery of its Road-of-Life and Heat-for-Health programmes, alongside confidential support to military units. This funding has supported the delivery of hundreds of additional stoves and water boilers.

Over the past year, we have supported Kiwi K.A.R.E with a range of governance and trust administration matters.

"We have been working with RMcV for four years and their steadfast support remains invaluable. We're grateful for their continued trust and genuine care. Partnerships like this don't just provide legal support; they fuel momentum and remind us that real change happens through sustained collaboration."

Tenby Powell, Chairman, Kiwi K.A.R.E

\$7.8m

Raised by Kiwi K.A.R.E to support four core services:

60 additional ambulances delivered as part of the expansion of their fleet, supporting operations in eastern and southern Ukraine

Evacuated more than 7,000 internally displaced people requiring medical assistance by Road-of-Life teams

800 humanitarian missions to red zone areas completed

8,000 stoves & water heaters distributed through their 'Heat-for-Health' initiative

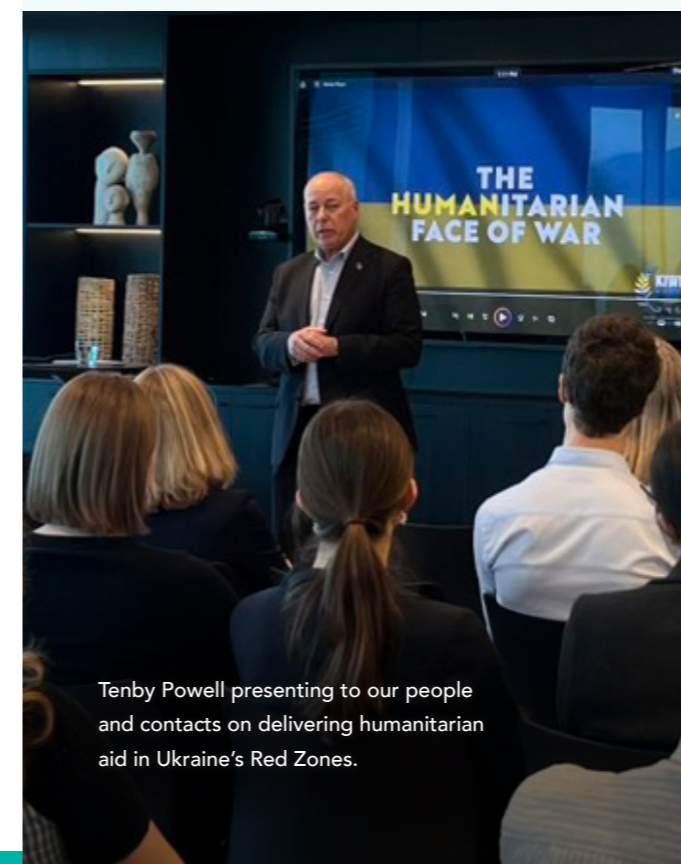


Stand with Ukraine rally in Auckland.

Mahi for Ukraine

Since 2022, we have helped [Mahi for Ukraine](#) with its government relations strategy to advocate for immigration and humanitarian aid for Ukrainians in New Zealand. This includes facilitating meetings with key officials and MPs to push for policy changes. Over the past year, we have also supported their engagement with the Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs ministers, including developing the policy case for additional support for initiatives.

We are one of several New Zealand law firms supporting Mahi for Ukraine in advocating for the Ukrainian community to ensure New Zealand plays a meaningful role in the global humanitarian response.



Tenby Powell presenting to our people and contacts on delivering humanitarian aid in Ukraine's Red Zones.

[READ MORE](#)



Advocating for the Arts



Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival

Since 2013, we have assisted [Auckland Arts Festival](#) with their programme, providing essential pro bono legal services.

“Russell McVeagh’s support ensures we provide fair, detailed and current contracts for international and New Zealand artists, and offers high-level professional care to the team. They also provide essential advice for presenting leading-edge creative works and navigating unforeseen events during the Festival.”

Vanessa Zigliani
Head of Business and Finance,
Auckland Arts Festival

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Greenbay Primary School Visit to Pauline Yearbury Life in Forms exhibition, 2025, Photo Credit: Te Uru.

Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery

[Te Uru](#) plays a vital role in Auckland’s contemporary art landscape, supporting equitable access to art and culture through strong community outreach. This includes initiatives such as providing bus transport for school groups from lower socio-economic areas, often giving students their first experience of a public art gallery. We have supported Te Uru in developing key governance and operational documents to safeguard its future, including assisting the Gallery with its re-registration process under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.

“Support from Russell McVeagh enables Te Uru to uphold best practice across all areas of our work - from artist agreements to the care around the complexities of ambitious contemporary art projects.”

AD Schiering
Director, Te Uru

READ MORE



Charlotte Macdonald FRSNZ, with Kahu Hotera from the Royal Society Te Apārangi, at the launch of her book.

Bridget Williams Books Limited

[Bridget Williams Books \(BWB\)](#) is an award-winning independent New Zealand publisher with a strong focus on history, Māori perspectives and public policy. For more than 30 years, BWB has supported critical scholarships, publishing some of New Zealand’s most significant books and deepening public understanding of the nation’s history and identity.

BWB is undertaking an innovative transition to continue publishing as a not-for-profit social enterprise through the BWB Publishing Trust, alongside a major educational outreach programme in schools and leading Treaty scholarship, including accessible texts on Te Tiriti and He Whakaputanga. We have supported BWB on this journey by providing strategic advice and stakeholder engagement and trust administration support.

READ MORE

BWB BRIDGET
WILLIAMS
BOOKS



Jessica Palalagi, Director, celebrating 25 years of The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi at the 2025 Arts Gala.

The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi

25 years ago, a group of visionary New Zealanders established [The Arts Foundation Te Tumu Toi](#). Since then, the Foundation has distributed more than \$25 million directly to artists across Aotearoa. As the country’s only national arts organisation that is 100% philanthropically funded, the Foundation champions outstanding artists across disciplines through its Icon, Laureate and Springboard Awards.

At the heart of the Foundation is a vibrant community of artists, philanthropists and businesses united by a shared belief in the transformative power of the arts. Together, they’re committed to building a stronger culture of giving to the arts for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

READ MORE

Other organisations we support

Hauora · Health and Emergency Services



Whakaurunga · Inclusion



Rangatahi · Youth



Taio/Environmental and Pāpori/Social Impact



Industry Focus



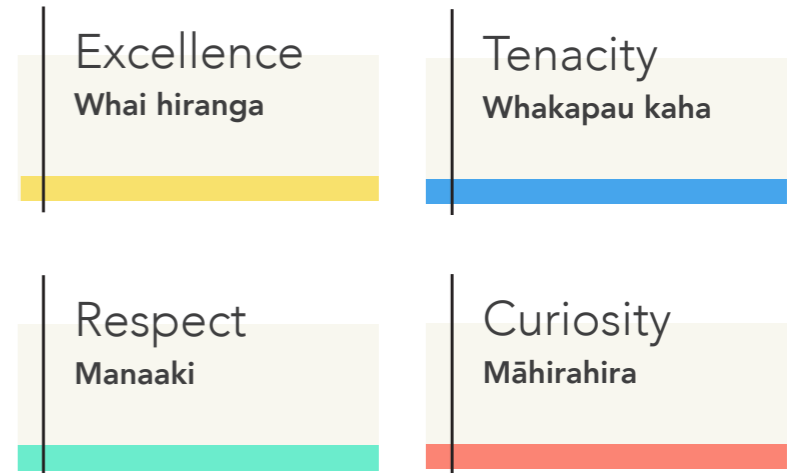
Our Pro Bono Framework

In line with the Framework for Collaborative Pro Bono in Aotearoa, which promotes shared responsibility, equitable access to justice and sector-wide coordination, our firm's Pro Bono Framework reflects these values through a strategic, structured approach focused on increasing access to justice.



Our values

Our values are integral to the way we operate and the service we provide to all our clients. Working with some of the most forward-thinking charitable and not-for-profit organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand through our pro bono work is an example of how we live our values.



To find out more about how we define pro bono, [visit our website](#).



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